

HCS HB 174 -- ALTERNATIVES-TO-ABORTION AGENCIES

SPONSOR: Hubrecht

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Children and Families by a vote of 7 to 3. Voted "Do Pass" by the Committee on Legislative Oversight by a vote of 8 to 2.

This bill requires the constitutions and laws of the United States and Missouri to be interpreted, construed, applied, and enforced to fully protect the rights of an alternatives-to-abortion agency and its officers, agents, employees, and volunteers to freely assemble and freely engage in religious practices and speech without government interference.

Nothing in the bill must preclude or preempt a political subdivision from exercising its lawful authority to regulate zoning or land use or to enforce a building or fire code regulation, provided that the political subdivision treats an alternatives-to-abortion agency in the same manner as a similarly situated agency.

The bill permits a court to order injunctive relief with specified damages for violations of the provisions of the bill and permits the Attorney General to bring a cause of action to defend the rights guaranteed under the provisions of the bill.

This bill contains an emergency clause.

This bill is similar to SB 41 (2017).

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that the bill reaffirms the right to free speech and preempts a political subdivision from creating rules to prevent pregnancy resource centers from providing resources to expectant mothers. Case management, counseling, life skills, and transportation are all examples of services that pregnancy resource centers provide to families and they are asking that they be free to operate within accordance with their mission without interference with politically motivated local ordinances.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Hubrecht; Helen Risse, Our Lady's Inn; Karen Nolkemper, Archdiocese of St. Louis; Campaign Life Missouri; Missouri Right To Life; Kathy Forck; Sherry Kuttentkuler; Joanne Schrader; Missouri Catholic Conference; Kerry K Messer; and Lisa Pannett.

OPPOSERS: Those who oppose the bill say that the legislation was filed in response to St. Louis Board Bill 203. Board Bill 203 did exempt religious organizations from recommending or providing an

abortion and protects citizens making decisions regarding their reproductive health.

Testifying against the bill were Planned Parenthood Advocates; NARAL Pro-Choice Missouri; American Civil Liberties Union; Crally Yuggwa, Future Physicians For Progress; and Christine Ingrassid, St. Louis Board Of Alderman.